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The Management of Creativity: Redux

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Addressing the Problem: “The Management of Creativity” Version 1.2

The immediate problem facing the authors was replacing someone with the background and stature of Joseph Abboud with an individual or, as it eventually worked out, four individuals with differing creative backgrounds and levels of success that would be of benefit to the students (in the spring 2006 semester the course was offered to undergraduate business students) enrolled in the course. Replacing Abboud proved to be not as difficult as the authors originally imagined. Within a period of three weeks, four individuals with diverse backgrounds in film, music, sports entertainment, and entrepreneurship were identified and agreed to take part in the newly redesigned course. In hindsight, these individuals created a dynamic new learning environment for the students enrolled in this course, one they could not have benefited from previously.

It should be kept in mind that the purpose of the class was, and continues to be, to offer business students the opportunity to hear from successful individuals from various creative disciplines and to offer students opportunities to hear of the challenges they faced and continue to face with regard to financing and marketing their respective businesses and careers. It is not unusual for individuals with creative backgrounds to have little or any experience or knowledge of the challenges with regard to financing and marketing their ideas. This, once again, was the onus for the development and continuation of this class.

Changes To the Creative Team:

The Benefits Of A More Diverse Representation

After several meetings and numerous phone calls the authors, through their personal contacts, identified four individuals from various creative backgrounds, who agreed to participate in the course as members of its new creative faculty.

Tom McCarthy – Film Writer and Director

The first member of the newly formed creative faculty is the successful movie, television, and stage actor Tom McCarthy. In addition to his acting career he was the recipient of an award at the internationally known Sundance Film Festival in Colorado as the director and writer of the movie, *The Station Agent*. Tom began by discussing with students the various creative elements of the film, such as the story line, where the idea came from, and the challenges of casting a film, especially one starring such a special leading actor. Tom spoke at great length about the difficulty of raising the amount money necessary to make the film. With regard to the finances he discussed traditional financing options such as first going to family and friends as well as opportunities such as venture capitalists. Tom also discussed, at length, various casting issues he had to live with in order to complete the film on budget. In order to prepare the students to better interact with Tom they were asked to preview the film prior to his visit. In addition, portions of the film were also shown and discussed in class especially with regard to its marketing.

Sarah Atereth – Song Writer and Performer

The second member of the newly formed creative faculty is pop singer, Sarah Atereth, who at the time of her presentation had just completed her first solo CD and had one of her songs from the CD reach the Top 25 in the Billboard Pop Charts. Sarah spoke to the class not only about the rigors and challenges of writing songs, both the words and the music, but also about the costs associated with making and marketing a CD without the support of a music company and the problem of getting her music played on the air. She discussed the opportunities and challenges of creating her own web site, maintaining it, responding to emails from fans, creating her own database, and using direct mail as part of her overall marketing plan. At the conclusion of the semester Sarah invited the class to a recording studio in New York City where they were able to watch Sarah record one of her songs and talk to her producer about the difficulty of actually recording a CD.

Kurt Schneider – Vice President (Marketing) World Wrestling Entertainment

The third member of the newly formed creative faculty, Kurt Schneider, currently holds the position of Vice President of Marketing for WWE (World Wrestling Entertainment) the tremendously successful professional wrestling television program headquartered in Stamford, CT. Kurt spent the greater portion of his presentation, to an audience of over 200 students (most of whom are wrestling fans), sharing with them the variety of marketing opportunities used by the WWE to expand the WWE brand and their ever growing international fan base. Kurt spoke at length about the development and growth of Pay-Per-View programming as well as televising of live global events. He spoke at length about the incorporation of fully integrated brand strategies as a part of the WWE brand mix, the increased use of the Internet to promote the brand and its associated merchandising as well as consumer products marketing. He explained to the students that WWE shows were not athletic competitions, to no one's surprise, but sports entertainment and how WWE has become successful not only in the United States but around the world. He concluded by discussing how television is only one of a number of marketing opportunities used by WWE to attract and retain their loyal fan base.

Paolo Volpati-Kedra – Founder and President of Sauces & Love

The fourth member of the newly formed creative faculty is Paolo Volpati-Kedra, Founder and President of Sauces & Love, a company headquartered in Boston, MA that manufactures and sells a variety of fresh pasta sauces. He explained to students how he and his wife originally conceived the idea for developing a line of fresh pasta sauces in their own kitchen after their dinner guests would continually tell them how great their sauces were. He went on to speak about how they then managed to come up with enough money to launch the company (similar to those experienced by Tom McCarthy in financing his film). Paolo told the students how he began by personally making the sauces in a rented garage and then personally delivering them to stores in his car. He discussed how his wife created the marketing plan and marketing materials and how she would personally arrange for taste test demonstrations of their products in various stores that had agreed to carry their products. The highlight was when each student was presented with a gift pack of three of his sauces.

Benefits Managing Creatively: Redux

Each of the four presentations was conducted every three weeks during the semester. Because each

speaker committed to a specific date during the semester the instructors were able to develop a syllabus around the speaker's personal schedule. In the past students were never sure when Mr. Abboud would be available due to his busy schedule. Since there were four speakers spread out over the entire semester this provided an opportunity for Gerlach and Maresco to spend time between the presentations providing background on the speakers, having students research their products, and building upon previous lectures regarding finance and marketing.

The final grade involved student presentations based on the television program "The Apprentice." The class was broken down into five groups of three students each who were given a similar product to develop, finance, and market. Each group was required to present their marketing and financial plans in front of the class instructors, including the singer, Sarah Atereth. Each group was graded on the professionalism of their presentation, keeping to a specified time limit, fifteen minutes, and how well they addressed the overall issue of marketing and financing a new product using information gathered from the four lectures and classroom discussions.

Conclusion

Based on student evaluations, the redesign of "The Management of Creativity" proved highly successful. In retrospect the new format provided them with a more varied and rewarding classroom experience than in the originally developed class. Hearing personal reflections from four individuals from film, entertainment, sports entertainment and entrepreneurship made a tremendous difference in their learning experiences. Students were able to better understand the relationship between finance and marketing and how difficult it is for creative individuals to deal with these factors especially when starting from scratch. It is anticipated that the same creative faculty will once again be taking part in this learning experience in the future; especially with regard to our MBA students.

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